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ROSTOF PEARLS

A Social Incident in One Act

BY

MARY ROSS NEVITT

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THE ROSTOF PEARLS

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MRS. RANSDALL

JANET RANSDALL

WINIFRED RANSDALL

} .. *Daughters to Mrs. Ransdell*

COUNTESS ROSTOF

MRS. EDGERTON AMES

MISS PERKINS

CELESTE

PLACE:—*The RANSDALL residence in Washington.*

TIME:—*The present.*

THE ROSTOF PEARLS

DESCRIPTION OF SET:—A *boudoir* in the RANSDELL residence. R., a door leading into hall. Rear, a pretty couch. R. 1 E., a dressing-table containing toilet accessories. Several chairs are disposed about room. C., is a small table. Doors rear.

DISCOVERED:—CELESTE seated at dressing-table trying on various hats which she has laid on chair beside her. There are others on couch. She eyes herself with evident admiration; she tries on another hat, looks disgusted and throws it over on couch. There is a knock at the door.

CELESTE. (*hastily picking up hats and depositing them on couch*) Entrez!

(*Enter MISS PERKINS, a severe looking, plainly-dressed woman of about thirty.*)

MISS PERKINS. The butler told me I was to come in here. I'm Miss Perkins, from the Pinkerton offices. (*begins taking off gloves*)

CELESTE. Pinkerton?

MISS PERKINS. The detective agency, you know. I've been sent up here to guard the presents, to see that none of the guests walk off with them.

CELESTE. Oui; oui; ze police. Oh, mademoiselle, ze presents! Oh, zey are vaire beaut'ful. So beaut'ful I nevaire see!

MISS PERKINS. (*crisply*) Where are they?

CELESTE. (*points to door rear*) Right in zere. I've been watching zem; ze guests, zey 'ave not come to see ze presents yet.

MISS PERKINS. (*removing hat*) I am sorry to say that I am a little late. Detained at court. I was on duty in one of the dressing-rooms at the British Embassy last week—during the reception to Lady Inglesby—when I discovered one of the guests departing with a gold powder-box, which I knew belonged to one of the receiving party. Of course I had to place her quietly under arrest. The case came up this morning. Unfortunately the reporters got in on it, so I suppose the whole affair will appear in the papers. One cannot be too careful at these large social functions. (*points to door, rear*) This way, you say? (CELESTE *nods her head affirmatively*).
Exit MISS PERKINS:)

CELESTE. (*gesticulating*) Zat woman, how she talk!

(*Enter* MRS. RANDELL and WINIFRED.)

WINIFRED. (*going to dressing-table*) Celeste, some powder, quick! I am a sight! Mamma, are you running away, too? (*sits at dressing-table*)

MRS. RANDELL. I just came up to rest a minute. I am completely exhausted! The countess is taking my place.

WINIFRED. The countess! Mother, you forget that for the last hour and something over, Janet has been the countess. I suppose you are referring to Sergius' mother.

MRS. RANDELL. Well, the dowager countess, then.

Isn't Janet perfect? The wedding is a great success. Everyone of importance is here.

WINIFRED. Yes; everyone of importance; but I cannot understand the presence of one of our guests—Mrs. Edgerton Ames. My dear mamma, why did you invite her?

MRS. RANDELL. I believe your father has some business affairs with the Senator.

WINIFRED. (*superciliously*) When we women manage politics, I shall only vote for men whose wives will be a social addition to the Capital. It's dreadful having all sorts of people thrust upon one. But isn't Society perfectly splendid, mamma? Oh, do you think I'll take? (*goes over to her mother*)

MRS. RANDELL. (*puts her arm around WINIFRED*) Of course you will! I think you will be a greater success than Janet. Somehow, Janet is a little too serious.

WINIFRED. (*kisses her impetuously*) Oh, mamma! Maybe I'll get a prince! I must go down now. Even if there are six bridesmaids, the maid of honor is—well, quite important! Good-bye.

(*Exit WINIFRED.*)

MRS. RANDELL. Celeste, bring me a mirror. (CELESTE *does so*; MRS. RANDELL *gazes at her reflection in mirror*) A trifle pale, Celeste.

CELESTE. *Oui, madame; ze rouge.* (CELESTE *takes rouge and applies it*)

MRS. RANDELL. I hope you have not put on too much.

CELESTE. Oh, no, madame, just un peu—vair leetle. Ze madame ees a—a dream! (*stands off and admires* MRS. RANDELL. *Enter JANET*)

JANET. Mother!

MRS. RANDELL. Why, Janet! Go right downstairs! The idea of a bride leaving! Why——

JANET. Don't be cross, mother; I can spare only a few minutes. Celeste, bring me a glass of water.

CELESTE. Oui, madame la comtesse! Pardon, madame, but—you look so—so——

JANET. Hurry, Celeste. (*exit CELESTE*) Mother, I am worried nearly to death! I noticed that—that—a man in business clothes stopped father and they went into the library and they were in there a long time and—and—father looked so worried—Oh, mother! something is wrong! I have been noticing it.

MRS. RANSDELL. Oh, the man is—is some business person, I presume. How should I know? I—I don't know all your father's business affairs. He——

JANET. Mother, you must tell! You have been different lately. You look older——

MRS. RANSDELL. (*shrieks*) Older! Good heavens! I thought that young woman knew her business! I'll have to change my masseuse.

JANET. Yesterday you avoided the subject. I'll be missed, so please be quick, mother. (*enter CELESTE with water*) There's—oh, Celeste, you might go down now and see if Simpkins can find you something to eat.

CELESTE. Oui, madame.

(*Exit CELESTE.*)

JANET. Well, remember, mother, in less than an hour I will be leaving for, perhaps, months; don't let me go away with this doubt on my mind about father. Just think, mother, we sail to-morrow——

MRS. RANSDELL. I suppose it will be the first thing you will hear when you land at Southampton, so I might as well tell you now. Janet, dear, I've tried to keep it from you, but you insist upon my telling you, and—I suppose our daughters should know first. Janet, we are ruined! Your father has

lost every dollar and to-morrow he will file a petition in bankruptcy.

JANET. Mother! We are—ruined!

MRS. RANSDELL. Yes. You insisted, you know.

JANET. Of course, I should know about it. Oh! But the wedding——

MRS. RANSDELL. My dear, the name of Ransdell is always good for credit.

JANET. (*in horror*) You mean—that—that none of this will be paid for?

MRS. RANSDELL. My dear child, you are so practical! Of course, in time——

JANET. Rauscher is in charge; isn't he?

MRS. RANSDELL. Yes.

JANET. Fortunately, he can afford to wait. But—my settlement on Sergius—my dower——

MRS. RANSDELL. That nearly ruined us; it left almost nothing, but——

JANET. Oh, mother, you did it all for me! Oh, mother dear, why did you do it?

MRS. RANSDELL. Don't say any more about it.

JANET. And Winnie! She was to have come out next month; what about her?

MRS. RANSDELL. I don't know, I'm sure.

JANET. Poor Winnie! What a blow this will be to her!

MRS. RANSDELL. Yes. And what makes it still more unbearable, Mrs. Ames is your father's largest creditor—that is, he used her stocks and——

JANET. He used her stocks!

MRS. RANSDELL. (*with dignity*) With her permission, of course. Good heavens! your father is not a thief! Oh, I don't know just how it was; he was to pay a large sum for the use of them, or interest or something—I don't know anything about business, Janet, but I know there is no money with which to reimburse her.

JANET. I wish we knew something about business. So that accounts for her presence here. Oh, how humiliating! Of course, she'll use her utmost influence to ruin us.

MRS. RANDELL. We have invited her to everything.

JANET. For the past three months—yes. Last season we simply ignored her.

MRS. RANDELL. My dear! People trying to get into Society do not remember what happened last season.

(Enter WINIFRED.)

WINIFRED. Good gracious, Janet, Sergius is tearing his hair out by handfuls; you'd better come down.

JANET. All right, I'll be right down.

(Exit Mrs. RANDELL and WINNIE. JANET walks up and down a minute; her face finally lights up; she goes to wall and presses button. Enter CELESTE.)

JANET. Celeste, bring me my traveling bag.

CELESTE. Oui, madame la comtesse.

(Exit CELESTE. JANET walks about. Enter CELESTE with bag.)

JANET. That will be all, Celeste.

(Exit CELESTE. JANET opens bag and takes out contents. Finally comes to a jewel case which she opens and takes out a string of pearls.)

These will help a little. I wonder how I can get rid of them. I know! In New York they won't be able

to trace them. (*she slips them in her bodice, and lays case on dressing-table as MRS. AMES enters*)

JANET. (*nervously*) How do you do, Mrs. Ames? I am just going downstairs. I trust you are not going yet.

MRS. AMES. Oh, no! My dear, the ceremony was beautiful! Such a bevy of charming girls!

JANET. Yes; I think it was lovely. I really must go, Mrs. Ames.

(*Exit JANET. MRS. AMES looks quizzically after her, then at dressing-table, to which she goes and looks at jewel case. Enter CELESTE.*)

CELESTE. Ah, madame must pardon! I did not know. (*helps her with gown*) Some powdair—or rouge, madame?

MRS. AMES. Yes. (*bus. of CELESTE powdering and rouging MRS. AMES*) My lips.

CELESTE. Oui, madame, certainement.

(*Enter COUNTESS ROSTOF.*)

MRS. AMES. Oh! Good-afternoon.

COUNTESS. Bonjour. You must pardon me, madame, but I meet so many I cannot remember names.

MRS. AMES. Mrs. Edgerton Ames, wife of Senator Ames of Illincis. I am a frequent guest at this house.

COUNTESS. Yes?

MRS. AMES. Didn't the new countess look lovely? Such a charming girl!

COUNTESS. Yes; there was but one fault—the absence of the Rostof pearls. The bride refused to wear 'em on account of some silly superstition.

MRS. AMES. Yes; everyone is talking about them.

Pearls mean tears, you know; bad omen for a bride.

COUNTESS. (*disdainfully*) Every bride of the house of Rostof has worn zem, for centuries past, wiz one exception—the princess Marie de Volschoff was forced to wed wizout zem as Napoleon—robber!—had carried zem off to France for his new bride, Marie Louise—but zey were recovered after Waterloo.

MRS. AMES. How interesting! You foreigners live on family tradition.

COUNTESS. Yes; but it is poor stuff to exist on.

MRS. AMES. That is the reason that international alliances are so evenly balanced.

COUNTESS. Ze pearls were presented to ze fifs Count of Rostof for his fidelity to Peter the Great. You must see zem, for zey may never be brought to America again. (*rings bell. Enter CELESTE*) I wish ze necglace—ze one ze countess vaw vearring ze ozzer night.

CELESTE. Oui, my lady. (*makes a curtsey, goes to dressing-table and opens large jewel case*) Ze pearls are not here.

COUNTESS. What! Ze pearls not zere! Find zem at once! (*CELESTE looks in other cases on dressing-table. Looks in drawer*)

CELESTE. Zey must be in ze safe. I will see. I know zey are in ze house. Only zis morning Mlle. Winifred was trying zem on.

(*Exit CELESTE.*)

COUNTESS. I must caution Jeannette to be more careful. Ze Americans are so—so—oh, so——

MRS. AMES. Exactly; so——

COUNTESS. Irresponsible; n'est-ce pas?

(*Enter CELESTE.*)

CELESTE. Your grace, zey are not zere; zey are—gone!

COUNTRESS. (*clinging to table*) Gone! Gone! Have you looked well?

CELESTE. Oui, my lady. Zey are lost! (*weeps*)

COUNTRESS. Keep quiet, you little fool! It shall be explained—ah—ah—(*pants, and grows red in the face*)

MRS. AMES. Pray be calm. Perhaps——

COUNTRESS. Calm!—Calm!—Oh, ze—ze—Did Peter ze Great give zem to ze fifs count of Rostof? Did Napoleon steal zem? Did—oh, no—no—no——

CELESTE. My lady! I—ze—I—will get her.

(*Exit CELESTE. Enters almost immediately with MISS PERKINS.*)

COUNTRESS. (*staring through her lorgnette*) Who are you?

MISS PERKINS. I am a Pinkerton agent.

COUNTRESS. Agent! What is zat?

MRS. AMES. A detective.

COUNTRESS. Zen get zose pearls! Oh——

MISS PERKINS. Please explain yourself.

COUNTRESS. What! Egsplain myself! I do not need egsplain myself. I am ze Countess Rostof, ze daughter of Baron von Wisin. Be careful, mademoiselle.

MISS PERKINS. I can't help who you are. You're in America now——

COUNTRESS. What! Ze impert——

MRS. AMES. She wants to help you.

COUNTRESS. Help! I embrace you! Ze pearls; presented to ze fift——

MISS PERKINS. Where were they lost? I haven't time to take down a history of Russia.

COUNTRESS. Oh, if zat Jeannette had worn zem——

(*Enter JANET and WINIFRED.*)

Oh, zere—where are ze pearls, Jeannette?

JANET. The pearls?

COUNTESS. Ze Rostof pearl necklace—oh, ze pearls zat were presented to ze——

JANET. Why I—I—, Celeste, where are the pearls?

CELESTE. Helas, my lady, zey are los'!

JANET. (*weakly*) Lost?

COUNTESS. (*excitedly*) Oui, oui!—Perdu—los'! Mon Dieu! you not know?

WINNIE. Have you looked everywhere, Celeste?

CELESTE. Oui, mademoiselle. Helas! Helas! Zey are gone!

(*Enter MRS. RANSDELL.*)

WINIFRED. Oh, mamma! there has been a robbery! Janet's necklace——

MRS. RANSDELL. What! Oh! where is that detective?

MISS PERKINS. Here.

MRS. RANSDELL. What do you mean by allowing the robbery? I am paying you for protection.

MISS PERKINS. I was employed to watch the wedding presents—not the family jewels.

MRS. RANSDELL. Such impertinence! Winnie, did you hear that?

WINNIE. I'm not deaf, mamma. You see, mamma is quite upset. You're a detective, and you'll find them; won't you?

MISS PERKINS. (*somewhat mollified*) They will be easy enough to find. Didn't you have them at the American Security and Trust?

COUNTESS. Yes; zey were zere till zey were presented to ze countess.

MISS PERKINS. Exactly; the "Star" had all the details with a photograph of the necklace. They have the description, of course. A valuable necklace like that is easily found if the loss is discovered in time.

Now, Mrs.—Countess—you say you had the necklace this morning——

JANET. No—yes—oh, I don't know!

WINIFRED. Oh, can't you see how nervous she is? I had the necklace about noon; we had just breakfasted in our boudoir and I was trying it on—then—oh, I remember! Janet said she was going to put it in her traveling bag.

CELESTE. Ze bag! Oh, madame, here is ze bag! (JANET is seated L. MRS. AMES stands near her, watching her furtively) Ze countess packed ze bag, saying she prifer—oui, I remember——

COUNTESS. (*sternly*) Jeannette, you packed ze bag!

JANET. Yes; but I—I—did not put the jewel case in; I—I left it on the dressing-table—there it is—

MRS. RANDELL. My dear child!

JANET. Oh——

WINIFRED. Goodness! Everybody is waiting to see the bride come down; she must dress——

MRS. AMES. You are all wrought up about this necklace, and, Miss Ransdell, your sister is so nervous she does not know what she is saying. If you will all go out I think I can find out who last saw the necklace.

COUNTESS. (*starting*) I vill break ze news to my son.

MRS. AMES. Don't you think we had better wait until we are sure it is lost?

COUNTESS. Oh, vaire well.

MRS. RANDELL. Janet, do you wish me to go? (JANET nods her head in the affirmative) Well! When my own child prefers—(*sweeps out of the room after the countess; MISS PERKINS and CELESTE exeunt*)

WINIFRED. (*running over to JANET*) Janet dear, I don't believe it is lost. Cheer up!

(*Exit WINIFRED.*)

MRS. AMES. Now, my dear, you might as well make a clean breast of it.

JANET. Mrs. Ames, you dare to insinuate—oh, excuse me, but——

MRS. AMES. (*places her hand on JANET'S arm*) Now I know you despise me! You and your friends have snubbed me unmercifully—I thought when my husband was made senator that the magic gates of society would be opened to me, but—I find you have to have something else. I've always envied you, but now I think I pity you, and, believe me, I want to help you.

JANET. I—don't—have you seen father?

MRS. AMES. My attorney has.

JANET. Then you know——

MRS. AMES. That financially he is ruined? Yes; now won't you confide in me?

JANET. (*breaks down*) I—I couldn't bear to see everything go—the house—everything! And Winnie—poor child! it will be so hard for her——

MRS. AMES. So you wanted to help?

JANET. (*rising, and drying her eyes*) Yes; and—well, I guess I'm still the useless creature I've always been. It's futile. (*takes necklace from bodice; vehemently*) Here! Oh, Mrs. Ames, I—I can't go away leaving things like this! I—what—a honeymoon! (*weeps*)

MRS. AMES. My poor child! Listen; I am your father's heaviest creditor; I'm going to take his note——

JANET. Oh, but he hasn't anything.

MRS. AMES. My dear, some day he may be able to pay me. I shall not feel it if he doesn't.

JANET. Oh, I can't let you do this.

MRS. AMES. Don't be foolish. (*writes check, hands it to JANET*) Here, you may give it to him. As for Winnie, I am thinking of taking a trip around the world, and I want some bright young person to keep me cheered up—don't you think Winnie's coming out can wait?

JANET. Oh, Mrs. Ames! You're—well, you're an Angel! (*hugs her*)

MRS. AMES. My dear, we have no children, and money alone doesn't bring happiness; its value lies in giving pleasure to others, and I like to see happy young faces. Now for the necklace; I'll put it—where can I put it?

JANET. See that little cabinet?

MRS. AMES. Yes. (*puts necklace in cabinet*) Now, I will call them. (*rings bell. Enter CELESTE*) Celeste, ask them all to come in. (*exit CELESTE. Returns with all*) The countess suddenly remembered having put the necklace in the cabinet? Will you look, Miss Ransdell? (*CELESTE looks in cabinet, finds necklace*)

WINIFRED. Oh, that's so! I'm not Miss Winnie any longer; I am Miss Ransdell. (*looks in cabinet*) Why, here it is! How perfectly splendid, Janet! (*there is a knock at door R. WINNIE goes to door*) All right. (*comes into room again*) It's Sergius. He wants to know why the bride doesn't put in an appearance.

JANET. Call the others, Celeste. (*CELESTE goes out a moment; the others all come in and make various exclamations of surprise over the recovery of the necklace. Then CELESTE, who has returned, suddenly remembers the note, gets it from beneath cabinet and gives it to JANET, who opens it and utters an exclamation of surprise*)

JANET. Let me read this note aloud. (*reads*) Agreeable to the instructions of the Count Rostof we

are sending by special messenger the pearl necklace belonging to the countess. The one sent on the 5th instant was a paste imitation made, as a precautionary measure, for exhibition only!

CURTAIN.



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